

Dead End in Mideast Owes to Blunders of President Carter, When He Threw Out the Shah 'Like a Dead Mouse'



by Conrad Black

We have now reached the dead end of the disasters of successive Democratic presidents in dealing with Iran. President Carter, as his national security advisor, Zbigniew Brezinski, remarked, "threw the Shah out like a dead mouse" in 1979. This has not received the attention it deserved as one of the greatest strategic blunders in the history of the United States.

The distorted vision that produced that terrible reversal in the correlation of forces and interests in the Middle East was echoed by President Obama's apologies for the secondary role played by the United States in the removal of the bumbling, Russian-influenced populist leader of Iran, Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953. This was in fact, chiefly a British enterprise, sponsored by Winston Churchill, and supported by President Eisenhower.

On their performances and services rendered to the cause of the west, the day will never come when those men will owe Mr. Obama an apology. This is illustrative of the delusional self-righteousness of the Obama and Biden notion that if we just appease Iran and Russia and Communist China enough, they will reform their unkind attitudes to America and the West and everything will get better. In fact, that is a certain way to ensure that everything gets worse.

Mr. Obama reneged on the American promise to provide the Czech Republic with anti-missile defenses, and while this became tangled up with a great many other policy issues involving Russia, and particularly Ukraine, it, undoubtedly contributed to the increasing confidence of our strategic opponents that they could act provocatively with impunity. Mr. Obama withdrew from Iraq, despite warnings that that could be hazardous, and ISIS almost overthrew the Iraqi government.

Mr. Obama announced a return of American and allied air strikes and modestly allowed that "This is American leadership at its best." The ghastly saga of President Biden's flight from Afghanistan is familiar to all. So is his syncopated response to Ukraine: first, it wouldn't matter if it were only an incursion into Russian-speaking territory. Then Russia was going to occupy the whole country in a few weeks and Ukraine and the world just had to acquiesce in it, but President Zelensky and his family would be evacuated.

Then President Putin was a war criminal and America and NATO would give them whatever it took, but not the weapons they needed, as that would be "escalatory." There was never a realistic exit strategy and the president spoke of defending "every square inch of NATO" but not a square inch of NATO was under threat. The NATO-sponsored Ukrainian offensive of 2023 was a fiasco.

The administration's immediate response to the Hamas invasion of Israel, and the barbarous slaughter of civilians in October was purposeful and unambiguous. It was proclaimed that Israel, of course, possesses the right to defend itself. Israel declared war on Hamas, formed a national unity government, declared its objective to be the elimination of Hamas as a terrorist entity.

This was implicitly ratified by continuing American encouragement, but in the now familiar pattern of this administration, defending itself did not mean actually

punishing and destroying those who inflicted on Israel the greatest destruction of Jewish life in a single day since the liberation of the death camps in Europe at the end of World War II.

The American administration's definition of Israeli self-defense fluctuated, according to the demonstrations of Palestinian or pro-Palestinian groups in Michigan and Minnesota, both states the administration needs to be reelected. The Israeli war plan systematically, and with as little damage to civilian life as was possible, tore up the immensely intricate and extensive Hamas network of tunnels and bunkers and has so far eliminated between 35 and 50 percent of the actual Hamas terrorist fighters.

The rest appear to be concentrated in and underneath Rafah in the south and the administration's definition of Israel's right of self-defense now consists of not attacking its cornered enemy until unspecified measures of relief have been accorded to the civilians in Gaza, the human shield Hamas hides under. The Hamas leader, Ismail Haniyeh, has publicly announced that the discomfort of civilians is welcome as it raises Palestinian hatred of Israel.

The Pentagon is now instructing Israel on how to conduct this war, which Israel, with full justification, considers a war for its survival, since Hamas has made it clear that it will never accept the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state, which is what the United Nations created it as in 1948. Israel also believes, and again with reason, that it is acting on the pledge of the Jewish people at the end of the Holocaust that the Jews would "never again" go passively to their deaths in large numbers without resistance or retaliation.

This brings us to the appropriate response to Saturday's swarming attack by Iran on Israel, with the launch of over 300 attack drones and ballistic and cruise missiles against Israel. The president must be commended for ordering a maximum

American effort to assist Israel in shooting down these air strikes, and it is a powerful confirmation of the technological sophistication and skill of the Israeli and American armed forces that approximately 99 percent of this attempted blitzkrieg was harmlessly destroyed in the air.

Nor is there anything inappropriate in America not participating in a retaliation by Israel against Iran. The problem with this administration's notion of strategic responses in the Middle East is that it does not understand that this is not just another skirmish over the division of territory between Jews and Arabs.

It was a murderous assault conducted with the greatest possible barbarity, on orders from Iran, to try to sabotage the agreement that was close between Israel and Saudi Arabia, and to exploit the demonstrated aversion of the major western powers to any Israeli measures sufficiently forceful to produce a material positive change in the correlation of strength in the region. Israel was to retaliate once again for the 10,000th time and leave it at that. Israel, though, is at war and is fighting for its existence and is entirely justified in exterminating Hamas as a terrorist organization.

It was entirely justified in killing an Iranian commander of the Hamas invasion of October in a supposedly diplomatic building in Iraq (a country that President George W. Bush's bungling has been largely handed over to Iran). After a massive air assault, which if it had not been for the superlative Israeli and American air defenses would have devastated much of Israel, it is time to recognize that Israel is at war.

As General MacArthur famously advised the United States, Congress and the nation in 1951: "Once war has been forced on us, there is no alternative then to apply every available means to bring that war to the swiftest possible victorious conclusion at the minimum possible cost in American and allied

lives. In war, there is no substitute for victory." We ignored that lesson in Korea, and in Vietnam, but we have no right to ask Israel, which is fighting a war all around its borders, and to some extent within its own territory, to forget that lesson also.

Israel would be perfectly justified in destroying Iran's missile-launching platforms and sophisticated defense production capabilities, and its oil production, refinement, and export assets. It is also entitled to destroy Iran's nuclear military program, and the whole world would applaud Israel for doing so. It could let it be known that if there was a further retaliation, Israel would set out to kill the entire leadership of this belligerent and malignant theocracy, which largely owes its incumbency to President Carter's abandonment of our reliable and relatively progressive ally, the Shah of Iran.

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